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SUBJECT: Sudan - Humanitarian Programs in Mundri County

Summary

¶1. From June 20 to 23, USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Disaster Operations Specialist Jennifer Mayer visited humanitarian programs in Mundri County, Western Equatoria State, Southern Sudan. In September 2005, conflict over grazing rights between Dinka and Moru groups erupted in Mundri County. Heavy fighting in the area lasted for several months, displacing thousands of people. Communities are beginning to recover, but the conflict and low levels of rainfall last season have resulted in diminished food stocks and a more acute hunger gap than in years past. According to the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SRRC), more than 6,200 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees have returned to Mundri County since January 2006. The potential for ethnic conflict and continued volatility, however, remains the main factor threatening post-war recovery in Western Equatoria, as evidenced by the outbreak of fighting in Mvolo County. USAID/OFDA is funding four partners in Mundri County in support of food security, income generation, health, infrastructure improvements and capacity building for local organizations. End Summary.

Background

¶2. From June 20 to 23, USAID/OFDA's Jennifer Mayer visited USAID/OFDA-funded humanitarian programs in Mundri County, Western Equatoria State, Southern Sudan. In fiscal year 2006, USAID/OFDA is funding four partners in Mundri County in support of food security, income generation, health, infrastructure improvements and capacity building for local organizations.

¶3. In 1992, the first major South-South conflict occurred in Bor County, driving the majority of Bor Dinka to Equatoria. Since that time Mundri County has hosted tens of thousands of Dinka cattle herders and hundreds of thousands of Dinka-owned cattle. Relations between the local Moru communities and the well-armed Dinka cattle herders have always been tense. In September 2005, conflict erupted between the Dinka and Moru over grazing rights in Mundri County. As Dinka herdsmen moved through the region en route to Bor County, their livestock damaged Moru crops and tensions between the two ethnic groups ignited. Heavy fighting in the area lasted several months, displacing farm communities and destroying local cropland, villages, and homesteads.

¶4. In addition to the conflict, low rainfall levels last season have resulted in crop losses and diminished food stocks at the start of the planting season. Communities are facing a more acute hunger gap than in years past. Few commodities are available in local markets around Mundri County, and prices are very high. Many families depend on gathering wild foods for sustenance, a labor-intensive activity that leaves little time for cultivation. In response, USAID/OFDA partner Norwegian People's Aid has distributed food aid in five locations around the county. Local authorities report that overall cultivation activities are reduced, which may affect the harvest this year.

¶5. The SRRC secretary in Lui reports that more than 6,200 IDPs and refugees have returned to Mundri County since January 2006. IDPs are returning from Khartoum, Yambio, Maridi, and Yei, and refugees are returning from Uganda and the Central African Republic. Most returnees are staying with relatives and reintegrating smoothly into communities, and the onset of the rainy season and the hunger period has slowed returns to the county. Very few land disputes have arisen since the Dinka have moved out of Mundri, and the security situation has calmed.

Samaritan's Purse Supports Lui Hospital

¶6. USAID/OFDA partner Samaritan's Purse has operated Lui Hospital in cooperation with the Episcopal Church of Sudan since September 1997. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the presence of this well-supplied and fully staffed hospital has been the principal reason for IDP and refugee returns to the area as well as for the economic revitalization of Mundri County. Thousands of people have returned over the past two years, and schools, markets, and businesses have reopened. Lui Hospital serves a population of

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approximately 300,000 people living within a 120-mile radius of Lui Town. People who live closer to another regional hospital, for instance in Yei or Koteiba, often travel to Lui due to the hospital's reputation for high standards of care and reliable supplies of pharmaceuticals.

¶7. Lui Hospital has expanded in the past 18 months to include a nursing school. Twenty students from all over Southern Sudan are currently enrolled, and the school has graduated 45 nurses to date. Training consists of three levels, ranging from basic nursing procedures to the equivalent of a Registered Nurse certification. The nursing school improves the standard of care not only at Lui Hospital but also at clinics and hospitals across Southern Sudan, building capacity of the health sector and facilitating a transition from relief to development.

¶8. Lui Hospital treats on average 450 patients per month, over half of whom are children. The hospital's pediatric ward has 32 beds and is regularly occupied beyond capacity. The most common ailments affecting children are malaria, gastroenteritis, and respiratory infections. Lui Hospital also has a well-equipped surgical ward staffed by a trained surgeon. During the fighting in late 2005, the hospital was the only facility in the area with a trained surgeon and adequate equipment and drugs to treat the wounded. The hospital administrator reports that the Government of Southern Sudan's (GOSS) Ministry of Health has no plans to assume management responsibility for Lui Hospital in the foreseeable future.

CHF International Supports Food Security, Infrastructure, and Income Generation

¶9. USAID/OFDA partner CHF International implements a variety of programs in Mundri County aimed at improving food security and providing income-generation opportunities for local households. The Lui Women's Bakery Project bakes bread for sale to community residents. CHF's beekeeping initiative aims to increase local honey production and farmer incomes. CHF also assists the Mundri Youth

Development Association to sponsor agricultural activities, sports clubs, and small enterprises for young men and women throughout the county.

¶10. CHF's sub-partner, MEDIC, supports a local women's collective producing lulu nut (shea nut) oil for use in making lotion, cooking oil, and soap. The collective has been quite successful, with members selling between 40 to 60 liters of oil per day to international non-governmental organizations, local markets (including Juba), and even external markets (Nairobi and the United States). The program provides marketable skills and a regular income to 45 women participants in the collective.

¶11. CHF also supports construction of local county headquarter buildings in Mundri and Koteiba. The Mundri County Headquarters Office was completed in March 2006 and houses the county commissioner and administrative offices. The county commissioner reports that even with the construction of new offices, significant infrastructure needs remain, including feeder roads, repair of secondary schools, and offices for payam authorities. The commissioner reports the state governor approved a budget for these activities, but funds have not yet been made available.

Comment

¶12. The main factor threatening post-war recovery in this agricultural region of Western Equatoria State is the potential for renewed ethnic conflict. While security conditions are improving in Mundri now that the Dinka and their cattle have returned to Bor County, open conflict continues, with dozens of recent killings reported, in nearby Mvolo County. The GOSS is not yet able to maintain law and order. A humanitarian focus on essential services may be needed for another year in Western Equatoria State, before long-term funding mechanisms are in place, the GOSS is established and functioning well, and recovery of local economies allows people to meet needs on their own. End comment.

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